Requests from Himachal Pradesh for Adoption of Children by various Organizations

†1686. SHRI KRIPAL PARMAR: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether she is aware of the fact that Government of Himachal Pradesh, *vide* its letter dated 1st March, 1996 had requested Government to provide approval to some institutions like Himachal Pradesh Child Welfare Council, Mini Secretariat, Simla-2, Indira Ladies Club, Nahan, district Sirmour, Women Welfare Board, Chamba and Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, Rockwood, Simla, for adoption of children; and

(b) if so, the action taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) No, Sir. No such correspondence is available with the Ministry.

(b) Does not arise.

Facilities to senior citizens in Andhra Pradesh

1687. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the number of elderly citizen who have attained the age of sixty years or more in Andhra Pradesh, as on date;

(b) how many of them are being given old age pension or allowance; and

(c) the steps Central and the State Government have taken to provide financial security, health care and personal safety to these elderly citizen of the State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

GANDHI): (a) The Government does not have any data regarding the number of elderly citizens in Andhra Pradesh who have attained the age of sixty years or more as on date. However, as per the 1991 Census, the number of older persons aged sixty years or more in Andhra Pradesh is 45,10,929.

(b) The Ministry of Rural Development is implementing a Scheme called National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS) under the National Social Assistance Programme (NSASP). As per the information furnished by that Ministry, 466001 destitute persons who have attained the age of 65 years and above are being given old age pension @ Rs. 75/- per month.

(c) The Central Government has announced a National Policy on Older Persons in January, 1999. The policy provides a broad framework for inter-sectoral collaboration and cooperation both within the Government as well as between Government and Non-Government agencies. The Policy has identified a number of areas of intervention including financial security, health care and nutrition and protection of Life and property etc. for the well being of older persons in the country. The Policy has been circulated to all State Governments and UT Administrations for necessary action. The steps taken by the Central Government for implementation of the provisions of the Policy is laid on the Table of the House as mentioned in the statement (*See* below). The Central Government understands that the State Governments also take action on similar lines in the light of announcement of the National Policy.

Statement

Initiatives taken by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment since the announcement of the National Policy on Older Persons in January, 1999.

(i) National Council for Older Persons (NCOP) has been set up on 10th May, 1999 to operationalize the Policy. The first meeting of NCOP was held at New Delhi on 13th June, 2000. The members discussed the draft Action Plan for implementation of the National Policy on Older Persons.

(ii) Andhra has been set up to function as Secretariat of NCOP. It

is being administered by Agewell Foundation, an NGO, with the financial assistance from the Ministry. The major activities of Aadhar include receiving and taking follow up action on representations, the complaints and grievances of older persons.

(iii) Both the ongoing schemes of the Ministry for welfare of older persons have been reviewed and revised in the light of the National policy.

(iv) The Ministry commissioned a project called OASIS (an acronym for Old Age Social and Income Security) and appointed an 8 Member Expert Committee, headed by Dr. S. A. Dave, former Chairman of UTI, to examine policy issues connected with old age income security in India and submit its recommendations to the Government. The Committee submitted its final report on 11.1.2000. The Government is examining the recommendations made in the Report and no final decision has been taken on it.

(v) On the request of this Ministry, the Chief Justice of India advised Chief Justices of all High Courts in the country to ensure expeditious disposal of Court cases involving Older Persons.

(vi) Union Health Ministry has issued instructions to all the State Governments/UT Administrations for provision of separate queues for older persons at all stages.

(vii) At the initiative and with the financial assistance of this Ministry, a telephone helpline for older persons has been started by NGO called Agewell Foundation. This Helpline is functional since April, 1999.

(viii) National Institute of Social Defence has conducted a six months course during August' 1999 to February' 2000 for home care of elderly disabled persons. Subsequently, under the project National Initiative on Care for Elderly (NICE). Three months courses are organized on care of older persons. This course will help to prepare a cadre of care-givers to render comprehensive care to the aged in their homes and in the community.

(ix) The Ministry has finalized an Action Plan for 2000—05 for implementation of the Policy. This has been circulated to

concerned Departments/Ministries of the Central Government and State Governments/UT Administrations.

Facilities to Social workers, Senior Citizens, Handicapped, etc.

†1688. SHRI SURYABHAN PATIL VAHADANE: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the facilities provided by Government to freedom fighters, social workers, senior citizens and handicapped people in aeroplanes, railways and inter-State buses;

(b) whether Government are considering to bring the facilities provided to all these categories at the same level; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) Government offers free Railway pass (First Class/AC 2-Tier Sleeper) for freedom fighters and their widows, with an attendant, for life. Ex-Andaman Political prisoners and their widows are entitled for free air travel facility to visit Port Blair once a year from Chennai/Kolkata along with a companion. Also facility to travel in Shatabadi/Rajdhani Express trains along with a companion is available to freedom fighters. Many States/UT Administrations extend benefit of free travel to freedom fighters in State Transport Buses. State Governments extend facilities like concession in bus fares for Senior Citizens. Railways and Airlines too offer concession to Senior Citizens. Persons with Disabilities are entitled for fare concession for rail travel as well as in Indian Airlines flights.

(b) and (c) No proposal to bring the facilities provided to all the categories at the same level is under consideration.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.